

Teaching strategies and the importance of teaching novel in advanced EFL classes

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Abstract

The scholarly investigation is centered on uncovering the most impactful teaching methods for EFL (English as a foreign language) classrooms, explicitly emphasizing the use of literature, particularly novels. The study aims to understand better the value of teaching novels in EFL classrooms and how it can enhance students' language skills, vocabulary, and critical thinking abilities.

Moreover, the research aims to pinpoint and analyze various teaching strategies that can effectively teach Novels, resulting in a more engaging and captivating learning experience for students. The discoveries yielded by this research are precious to educators and curriculum developers in the field of EFL teaching, as they can furnish essential insights into how literature can be incorporated into the classroom curriculum purposefully and effectively. This research investigates effective teaching strategies and the importance of teaching literature for EFL (English as a foreign language) classrooms, specifically emphasizing novels.

Keywords: EFL, literature, teaching novel, advanced classes

Introduction

Practical English Language Teaching (ELT) requires teachers to recognize that each learner has unique retention levels, desired learning strategies, and motivation. Therefore, there may be better approaches to teaching than a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching, and teachers must create a tailored approach that caters to the individual needs of each learner. To achieve this, teachers need to consider various factors, including the learners' readiness, performance level, knowledge retention capacity, and availability of resources. Choosing the appropriate approach to ELT is challenging due to the broad scope of aspects that come into play. Teachers must select diverse and authentic learning tools from which learners can benefit. The chosen approach should initiate discussions, motivate learners, and provide ample language practice.

Furthermore, teachers must subject the entire teaching process to questioning to ensure effectiveness. Literary texts, particularly novels, have proven practical tools in ELT. Novels provide students with an engaging and captivating learning experience as they are exposed to authentic language use and diverse cultural perspectives. Reading novels can help students develop their vocabulary and comprehension skills as they are exposed to various words and expressions in context. This can lead to a more profound knowledge of the language and an increased ability to communicate effectively in English. Incorporating novels into ELT requires careful planning and consideration of various teaching strategies. Teachers must choose novels appropriate for their student's language level and interests and develop activities encouraging active reading and critical thinking. Teachers can use strategies like pre-reading activities, post-reading discussions, and writing assignments to help students engage with the novel and improve their language skills.

In conclusion, effective ELT should prioritize a tailored approach catering to each learner's needs. Teachers should select diverse and authentic learning tools that learners can benefit from and subject the entire teaching process to questioning. Novels are practical tools in ELT as they provide an engaging and captivating learning experience, develop vocabulary and comprehension skills, and encourage critical thinking. Teachers can use various teaching strategies to ensure that students obtain the maximum benefit from reading novels, making learning English more efficient and enjoyable.

1. Literature and English Language Teaching

"Literature and English Language Teaching" is a teaching approach that involves using literary works, such as novels, plays, and poems, as a tool for language instruction. This approach aims to teach students a more engaging and effective way of learning English by exposing them to authentic and diverse texts.

Through the use of literature, students have the opportunity to explore and analyze different literary genres and themes while also developing their language skills. They can learn new vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and grammatical structures in context, which can help them better understand and use the language. Moreover, analyzing literary works can help students develop critical thinking skills and cultural awareness as they explore different perspectives and cultures.

Literature can also create a more interactive and dynamic classroom environment. Teachers can design activities and discussions around literary texts, engaging students in meaningful conversations and promoting language practice. Additionally, literature can foster creativity and self-expression, as students can write their own stories, poems, and plays inspired by the works they have read. Collie and Slater (1987, p.1) state that...literature, which speaks to the heart as much as to the mind, provides materials with some emotional color that can create fuller contact with the learner's own life and can thus cancel the more fragmented development of many collections of texts utilized in the classroom.

Using literature in English language teaching can provide students with a rich and rewarding learning experience while promoting language and literacy development.

2 Literature in the English Language Classroom

The English language classroom is a space where students learn to read, compose, communicate, and comprehend the English language. One crucial aspect of this classroom is the teaching of literature. The topic of teaching literature in the English language classroom is complex and multifaceted, requiring a deep understanding of not only the literary works themselves but also the cultural, historical, and social contexts in which they were created.

Teaching literature effectively involves engaging students in critical thinking and analysis, encouraging them to explore different perspectives, and helping them develop their interpretations and opinions. It also involves guiding them to express themselves absolutely and constructively in composed and spoken forms, an essential skill in any language.

Furthermore, selecting appropriate literary texts is crucial in this process. Teachers must choose works that are relevant and interesting to students while also being appropriate for their age and level of language proficiency. A well-chosen literary text can spark curiosity, inspire empathy, and encourage students to think critically about the world around them.

It is also essential to provide students with the necessary support and guidance to understand and appreciate literary texts fully. This includes teaching them relevant vocabulary, explaining literary devices and techniques, and helping them make connections between the text and their own lives and experiences.

Ultimately, teaching literature in the English language classroom aims to cultivate a love for reading, a passion for learning, and a more profound knowledge of the world around us. Through literature, students can gain insights into different cultures, histories, and perspectives and develop their capabilities to read, write, speak, and feel critically and creatively. According to Lazar (1993, p.3), the main aim of using literature in the classroom is that literature provides excellent material for eliciting strong emotional responses from students. Using literature in the classroom is a productive way of applying the learners individually. It delivers excellent opportunities for learners to communicate their thoughts, reactions, and feelings.

3 Importance of Literature in Language Teaching

Literature is a powerful tool widely acknowledged for its significant role in language teaching. It offers many benefits to language learners that can transform their learning experience. Firstly, literature exposes learners to authentic language, which can help them develop their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. By reading and analyzing authentic texts, learners can improve their vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation while understanding how language is used in real-world situations. Abuzahra and Farrah (2016) state, "The authenticity of the literary work, the richness of the language, the scope of imagination and creativity, and the process of critical thinking are just a few advantages of using literary genres in the language classroom" (pp.23).

Secondly, literature can expose learners to a wide range of cultural attitudes and knowledge, broadening their horizons and enabling them to think critically about the world around them. Learners can develop empathy, tolerance, and understanding

of diverse perspectives by reading literature from different cultures and periods. They can also achieve a more profound gratitude for the richness and complexity of human experiences, which can be essential for creating a more inclusive and compassionate society. As Collie and Slater (1987) suggest, literature provides a "bountiful and extremely varied body of written material," which is vital in the sense that it talks, describes, and shares fundamental human issues that are "enduring" rather than "ephemeral" (pp. 3).

Finally, literature can be a source of motivation and enjoyment for learners, which can help sustain their interest and enthusiasm for language learning. When learners are engaged in reading literature, they are more likely to develop a love of language learning, which can lead to better long-term outcomes. Additionally, literature can provide a sense of cultural identity and belonging, which can be crucial for learners studying a foreign language and culture.

At last, incorporating literature into language teaching can be an adequate way to create a more enjoyable, meaningful, and effective learning experience for learners. By providing learners access to authentic language, diverse cultural perspectives, and a source of motivation and enjoyment, literature can help learners develop their language skills, broaden their horizons, and cultivate a lifelong love of learning. There are many more reasons why literature is essential to language learning; for example, Violetta (2015) deems that literary genres can motivate learners because they offer rich material full of fun classroom activities. Researchers also believe that literary texts improve students' imagination. McRae (1991) states that books have a space for creativity and a space for the practice of mental energy. In addition, Violetta (2015) mentions that because literary texts are full of discussions, they help learners improve their answers to specific academic work in a way that guarantees their use of imagination. Literary texts contribute to language acquisition. Pinar and Jover (2012) studied the advantages of using literature. Literature may deliver a suitable way of promoting language acquisition. Also, Lazar (1993) points out that learners can deliver meaningful and memorable texts that would encourage language acquisition. Similarly, Hişmanoğlu (2005) notes that literature is essential in teaching the four language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Therefore, it provides a holistic approach to ELT.

4. Use of Novel in English Language Teaching

The incorporation of novels in English language teaching has become increasingly prevalent due to its effectiveness in improving students' language skills and critical thinking abilities. Novels offer an immersive and captivating learning experience, exposing students to authentic language use and diverse cultural perspectives. Novels are an abundant source of vocabulary and grammatical structures that can aid in developing students' language skills. They provide a contextual understanding of language use, enabling students to comprehend the intricacies of the language and enhance their usage of it. Additionally, reading novels can foster critical thinking skills as students analyze the story's themes, characters, and plot, encouraging them to think more deeply about the language they are learning.

Moreover, novels can assist in developing students' reading comprehension skills. As they read, students are exposed to various sentence structures and vocabulary, which enhances their ability to comprehend written texts. This skill is crucial for success in academic and professional environments. Teachers should meticulously plan and employ different strategies to integrate novels into English language teaching. They should select novels appropriate for their student's language level and interests and design activities encouraging active reading and critical thinking. Teachers can use strategies like pre-reading activities, post-reading discussions, and writing assignments to help students engage with the novel and improve their language skills.

In conclusion, incorporating novels in English language teaching can be helpful for educators and curriculum designers. Novels offer a compelling way to enhance students' language skills, critical thinking abilities, and reading comprehension. Teachers can use various teaching strategies to ensure that students obtain the maximum benefit from reading novels, making learning English more efficient and enjoyable.

5. Importance of Teaching Novels in EFL Classroom

Using novels as a teaching tool in English language classrooms has become increasingly popular, and for good reason. Novels offer an immersive and captivating learning experience that exposes students to authentic language use and diverse cultural perspectives. As a result, students can develop their language skills, critical thinking abilities, and reading comprehension through the reading process. Novels provide an abundance of vocabulary and grammatical structures that can aid in developing students' language skills. Moreover, novels help contextualize language use, allowing students to understand the intricacies of the language and enhance their usage of it. In addition, reading novels fosters critical thinking skills as students analyze the story's themes, characters, and plot. This encourages them to think more deeply about the language, forming a stronger connection and appreciation.

Furthermore, novels offer a window into different cultures and perspectives, broadening students' horizons and expanding their worldviews. One of the most significant benefits of incorporating novels into English language teaching is the development of reading comprehension skills. Novels expose students to various sentence structures and vocabulary, enhancing their written text comprehension. This skill is crucial in academic and professional environments, enabling students to understand complex texts and communicate effectively. Teachers must meticulously plan and develop different teaching strategies to integrate novels into English language teaching. They should select novels appropriate for their student's language level and interests and design activities encouraging active reading and critical thinking. Teachers can use strategies like pre-reading activities, post-reading discussions, and writing assignments to help students engage with the novel and improve their language skills. By using different teaching strategies, teachers can ensure that students obtain the maximum benefit from reading novels, resulting in a more efficient and enjoyable process of learning English.

In conclusion, incorporating novels in English language teaching can be valuable for educators and curriculum developers. Novels offer an engaging way to enhance students' language skills, critical thinking abilities, and reading comprehension. They allow students to immerse themselves in the language and culture, fostering a lifelong love for literature and language. By using different teaching strategies, teachers can ensure that students obtain the maximum benefit from reading novels, resulting in a more efficient and enjoyable process of learning English. According to Lazar (2007), novels give teachers and learners exceptional academic and linguistic opportunities. However, teachers should be conscious of the problems students may encounter while learning novels and the ways they should follow in class with this specific genre. Alkire (2010) found that students enjoy reading novels, so they become motivated in the classroom. In addition, she stated that novels "foster personal involvement in the language learning process" (p. 2). Lazar (1990) illustrated that novels allow students to practice motivating activities, such as extensive reading.

6. Strategies Used in Teaching Novel

Teaching novels in English language classrooms requires meticulous planning and a range of teaching strategies to ensure that students engage with the text and obtain the maximum benefit from reading. Here are some detailed strategies that teachers can use to teach novels effectively:

1. **Pre-reading activities:** Before students begin reading the novel, teachers can use pre-reading activities to help students understand the context and background of the story. This can involve introducing essential vocabulary, discussing themes and topics related to the novel, and making predictions about the plot and characters. Pre-reading activities are essential as they provide a foundation for students to understand and engage with the text more effectively.
2. **Reading strategies:** Teachers can use various reading strategies to help students engage with the text actively while reading the novel. This can include asking students to highlight and annotate important passages, identify literary devices and figurative language, and make connections between the text and their own experiences. Teachers may also provide students with reading comprehension questions or encourage them to ask their questions, thus promoting critical thinking and analysis skills.
3. **Post-reading discussions:** After students have finished reading the novel, teachers can facilitate post-reading discussions to encourage critical thinking and reflection. These discussions can include themes, character development, and plot. Teachers can also encourage students to connect the text and their lives, allowing them to understand the novel's relevance to the world around them. Post-reading discussions allow students to share their thoughts and ideas, thus promoting communication and collaboration skills.
4. **Writing assignments** can help students expand their language skills and critical thinking capabilities. Teachers can assign different writing tasks, such as essays, summaries, and creative writing assignments, to help students engage with the novel

further. Writing assignments can also help students to develop their writing talents and express their thoughts more effectively.

5. Role-play and drama activities: Role-play and drama activities can help students understand the novel's characters and plot more interactively. Teachers can assign roles to different students and have them act out different scenes from the novel, encouraging students to think more deeply about the characters and the story. This strategy can help students understand the novel more deeply by immersing them in the story and allowing them to experience it more engagingly.

In teaching novels in language classrooms, the following strategies are found to be used as described by Collie and Slater (1987):

- Prediction: what comes next in the plot of a novel?
- Guided writing: writing a letter or paragraph based on the novel.
- Cloze procedural: Filling the gap using the information of the novel.
- Retrospective writing: Reconstructed activities: Restructuring the novel's details differently.
- Character portrayal: Describing the character of any character in the novel using adjectives.
- Correcting the language of certain characters.
- Star diagram: Describe the plot and character of a particular figure of the star to foster students' understanding and appreciation of words.
- Parallel reading: Reading a similar text and making comparisons.
- A snowball summary: Develop the summary of the novel into different parts, e.g., events, theme, and the character's reaction.
- Summary comparison: Comparing different summaries produced by different learners.
- Oral review: Orally telling the summary with the help of some clues.
- Spot the speech: Identifying the speaker and what each quotation is about without referring back to the book.

Thus, teaching novels in English language classrooms requires a combination of different teaching strategies to ensure students engage with the text and develop their language skills, critical thinking abilities, and reading comprehension. By using pre-reading activities, reading strategies, post-reading discussions, writing assignments, and role-play and drama activities, teachers can help students obtain the maximum benefit from reading novels. These strategies can create a more engaging and practical learning experience for students, promoting their overall language development and fostering a love for literature and language.

Conclusion

Studying novels in advanced EFL classes is crucial in enriching the language learning process. The incorporation of literature, and specifically novels, in EFL teaching not only bolsters language skills such as vocabulary and grammar but also fosters critical thinking, cultural awareness, and creativity. Through various dynamic and interactive teaching strategies, educators can transform the classroom into an engaging atmosphere where students are motivated to explore various perspectives, express themselves, and think critically. Novels serve as a bridge, connecting learners

to authentic language usage and many cultural experiences, enhancing their ability to communicate effectively and sensitively in a global context. Ultimately, integrating literature into EFL education paves the way for students to become competent language users and empathetic and informed world citizens. As such, educators and curriculum developers must continue exploring and implementing practical approaches to teaching novels, ensuring that learners receive a comprehensive and meaningful education transcending linguistic proficiency.

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